

WINTER BIRD NOTES FROM EXTREME SOUTHERN  
ILLINOIS.

BY JOHN F. FERRY.

THE following notes were made on a short collecting trip to extreme southern Illinois in the interests of the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago. The time spent was between February 22-28, and the object of the trip was to make as complete a study as possible of the bird life at this season of the year. The region studied was that in the vicinity of Cairo, which city is situated at the juncture of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. The area included was about forty-five square miles, and besides Cairo, the villages of Mound City and Olive Branch were visited. The country near the two rivers mentioned is low and flat and is regularly submerged twice each year, at the times of the spring and fall rises of the rivers. Heavy levees for protecting villages and for carrying railroads and highways are practically the only elevations to be seen. At Olive Branch the country is diversified with low wooded ridges and hills and about two miles to the southeast lies a shallow lake of about five square miles area known as Horse-shoe Lake. Cypress is the prevailing growth about it but oaks, sweet gum, sycamore and sassafras form a considerable part of the surrounding forest. Originally the whole region under consideration was one of continuous forest, and much of this primitive condition still remains, although considerable areas have been cleared for farming. Frequent streams of varying size flow in a general southerly direction into the Ohio River. The most important of these is Cache Creek, a mile below Mound City. The soil is mostly a rich alluvial loam, while back from the rivers gravels, sand and clays prevail. The richness of the soil and the prolonged season of summer heat produce a luxuriant vegetation, and trees along the rivers grow into magnificent specimens of their kind.

The weather was changeable, cloudy weather predominating, but for about two hours preceding and following midday warm bright weather usually occurred. The effect of this warmth and sunshine upon bird life was very noticeable, a marked increase in species and individuals being observed during the continuance of

these favorable conditions. Rain fell continuously on the 23d except for part of the afternoon, and rain or mist were the accompaniments of a part of about half the days spent. Occasional touches of green in the meadows showed that the grass was beginning to revive. Frogs were heard croaking on the 24th; on the 26th a black and brown caterpillar (*Pyrrharcica isabella*) was seen, and small winged insects in low bushes on the river banks were seen daily. Through the courtesy of the U. S. Weather Bureau at Cairo, I am able to give the daily condition of the weather.

*Statement of Weather, Cairo, Ills.*

Feb. 1907	Temper- ature.		Precipitation, inches.	Wind.			State of Weather.		Notes.
	Maximum.	Minimum.		Prevailing direction.	Total daily movement.	Highest daily velocity.	Character of days.	Percentage of cloudiness.	
22	30	21	T	N E	309	20 E	Cloudy	10	Fresh winds for 24 hrs.
23	42	29	2.30	E	238	16 S E	Cloudy	10	Heavy sleet storm.
24	49	34	.56	N	314	24 N	Cloudy	10	Brisk winds last 12 hrs.
25	45	30	T	N E	218	15 E	Cloudy	10	
26	48	39	.29	E	141	12 W	Cloudy	10	
27	53	34	.0	N E	151	14 E	Cloudy	8	Dense fog 5.30 A. M. to
28	57	44	.04	E	121	11 S E	Cloudy	10	9.05 A. M.

*Larus* sp?—Gulls flying at a distance from the shore over the Ohio River could not positively be identified as *delawarensis* or *argentatus*; but they were undoubtedly one or the other.

*Lophodytes cucullatus* (?). HOODED MERGANSER.—Four ducks, undoubtedly of this species, passed just out of gun-shot on Horse-shoe Lake on Feb. 28.

*Anas boschas*. MALLARD.—Two Mallards were positively identified on Horse-shoe Lake on February 28, and they doubtless formed a considerable part of numerous flocks seen flying overhead at a considerable height. Hunters report them common here during the spring migration.

*Spatula clypeata*. SHOVELLER.—Four Shovellers were seen on Horse-shoe Lake on February 28. They were very active, either swimming rapidly about or making short, frequent plunges into the shallow water.

*Dafila acuta*. PINTAIL.—Pintail were probably the most abundant duck at this place. Several flocks were seen flying in a northerly direction

on February 26, and almost daily they were observed in varying numbers. Horse-shoe Lake has several times been the site of an extensive duck-roost largely occupied by these birds. An open space of water was fairly covered with the birds' cast-off feathers.

***Branta canadensis*.** CANADA GOOSE.— During cloudy weather the sonorous honks of the Canada Goose could frequently be heard, but the birds' whereabouts was a matter of mystery. They were probably flying overhead, but they may have been resting on the Ohio River, or on sand-bars, or in neighboring fields. In cornfields hunters had within a few days been successfully decoying them to blinds by the use of corn, shelled and on the cob. They are common in this region during migration.

***Fulica americana*.** AMERICAN COOT.— Four were seen on February 28, at Horse-shoe Lake.

***Oxyechus vociferus*.** KILLDEER.— Ten Killdeers were seen on February 23 in company with a large flock of Robins and a few Meadowlarks, in a wet field. Individuals were seen on February 25-27.

***Colinus virginianus*.** BOB-WHITE.— Common, but each year the season's increase is about killed off by shooters.

***Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*.** WILD TURKEY.— Two hunters and trappers, old residents of Olive Branch, reported a flock of 12-15 of these birds in the immediate vicinity. Several Wild Turkeys had been seen while the writer was in the neighborhood. The home of these birds is in the thickly timbered river bottoms, or in borders of cypress swamps such as are found about Horse-shoe Lake. They frequently resort to the higher timber land or make visits to farmers' fields where they find a scanty supply of last season's grain. Their scratchings are frequently seen in the underbrush. They readily decoy to an imitation of their call. They seek safety by rapid and noiseless running through the underbrush, and take wing only in an extremity. A favorite place of concealment is a bunch of mistletoe.

***Zenaidura macroura*.** MOURNING DOVE.— Two seen on February 27 on Cache Creek, and on the following day two were seen at Olive Branch.

***Cathartes aura*.** TURKEY VULTURE.— Fairly common at this season. Not seen during the coldest weather, February 22 and 23.

***Accipiter cooperi* (?)**. COOPER'S HAWK (?).— Three pointed-winged, long-tailed hawks, seen flying high on February 23, were identified as this species with reasonable certainty.

***Buteo borealis*.** RED-TAILED HAWK.— Several seen. One pair's intention of nesting were inferred from their frequent crying and their reluctance to leave a certain portion of the forest.

***Haliaeetus leucocephalus*.** BALD EAGLE.— Occasionally seen about Cairo, near the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. An immature bird was killed about the middle of January near Hough, Mo., thirty miles distant, where the man who showed me the bird in the flesh reported that the birds were abundant.

***Falco sparverius*.** SPARROW HAWK.— One seen on February 26.

**Syrnium varium.** BARRED OWL.—Two seen, and reported quite common by trappers. They are some times very annoying to trappers by setting off meat-baited traps.

**Dryobates villosus.** HAIRY WOODPECKER.—Tolerably common, but much less abundant than the following species.

**Dryobates pubescens medianus.** DOWNY WOODPECKER.—An abundant bird in this region. The males appeared to predominate, as five males and one female were taken.

**Centurus carolinus.** RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.—Common. They show a decided fondness for the tall soft-wood timber of the river bottoms. The large proportion of decayed tree trunks in such places is the probable explanation.

**Colaptes auratus luteus.**—First seen February 23. Tolerably common thereafter.

**Otocoris alpestris praticola** (?). PRAIRIE HORNED LARK (?).—Two Horned Larks, seen flying overhead on February 25, were presumed to be this species.

**Cyanocitta cristata.** BLUE JAY.—Common. A disposition to imitate the cry of the Red-tailed Hawk was manifested by the birds of this region. An almost perfect imitation was given by several different jays.

**Corvus brachyrhynchos.** AMERICAN CROW.—Common.

**Agelaius phoeniceus.** RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.—Two seen at Mound City on February 23. Quite common at Olive Branch on the 28th.

**Sturnella magna.** MEADOWLARK.—Common, keeping in small flocks, and wary.

**Carpodacus purpureus.** PURPLE FINCH.—Tolerably common; feeds on 'buttons' of sycamore tree.

**Astragalinus tristis.** AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.—Seen at Mound City and Olive Branch.

**Zonotrichia albicollis.** WHITE-THROATED SPARROW.—Tolerably common. Once, song heard.

**Spizella monticola.** TREE SPARROW.—Common. One evening about dusk a flock of these birds was seen picking up weed seeds on the ground when it was so dark the birds could scarcely be seen.

**Junco hyemalis.** SLATE-COLORED JUNCO.—Common, roving through the woods or flitting about shrubbery in flocks. In one grove, free from underbrush and where there was a thick carpet of fallen leaves, I came upon a host of these birds. They were alternately feeding among the dead leaves and flying to the nearest branches, where they poured forth their musical trills. When thirty or forty birds were singing at once a most beautiful medley filled the neighborhood.

**Melospiza cinerea melodia.** SONG SPARROW.—Tolerably common, occasionally singing.

**Melospiza georgiana** (?). SWAMP SPARROW (?).—One undoubtedly seen on February 24 in a patch of brown beard grass (*Andropogon scaparius* Michaux).

**Passerella iliaca.** FOX SPARROW.— First seen on February 24, and tolerably common thereafter.

**Pipilo erythrophthalmus.** TOWHEE.— Male and female seen on February 24.

**Cardinalis cardinalis.** CARDINAL. Abundant, the males constantly singing. Their brilliancy of color and song made them a most striking feature of the leafless woods. A male and female were frequently seen consorting together. They may have been mated in these cases.

**Ampelis cedrorum.** CEDAR WAXWING.— Quite common in flocks. One specimen had its throat stuffed with mistletoe berries.

**Lanius ludovicianus** (subsp ?).— A Loggerhead Shrike was seen on February 24.

**Dendroica coronata.** MYRTLE WARBLER.— Abundant. The cane-brake at one point along the Ohio River was fairly alive with these birds. They were pursuing small winged insects.

**Mimus polyglottos.** MOCKINGBIRD.— Three or four individuals were seen each day, February 23-25.

**Thryothorus ludovicianus.** CAROLINA WREN.— Tolerably common. Its clear warbling whistle would suddenly break forth from some cover of underbrush or river-drift with amazing loudness.

**Thryomanes bewicki.** BEWICK'S WREN.— One specimen was collected in low, damp woodland.

**Certhia familiaris americana.** BROWN CREEPER.— Tolerably common.

**Sitta carolinensis.** WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH.— Seen on February 26 and 28.

**Bæolophus bicolor.** TUFTED TITMOUSE.— The most frequently seen and most characteristic bird at this time and place. Frequently calling.

**Regulus satrapa.** GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET.— Two seen on February 26.

**Merula migratoria.** AMERICAN ROBIN.— Common in flocks. Not heard singing.

**Sialia sialis.** BLUEBIRD.— One or two seen each day from February 22 to 28.

Through the courtesy of Prof. H. A. Gleason, instructor in Botany at the University of Illinois, I am able to give a list of the following trees and shrubs which grow in the vicinity of Cairo.

#### *Ordinary Swamps.*

##### Trees.

<i>Acer rubrum,</i>	<i>Salix amygdaloides,</i>	<i>Populus deltoides,</i>
" <i>saccharinum,</i>	" <i>nigra,</i>	<i>Quercus palustris,</i>
" <i>negundo,</i>	<i>Celtis mississippiensis</i>	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua,</i>
<i>Gleditsia triacanthos,</i>	<i>Platanus occidentalis,</i>	<i>Nyssa sylvatica,</i>
<i>Hicoria pecan,</i>	<i>Populus heterophylla,</i>	<i>Fraxinus lanceolata.</i>

## Shrubs.

<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> ,	<i>Planera aquatica</i> ,
<i>Rosa carolina</i> ,	<i>Salix interior</i> ,
<i>Adelia acuminata</i> ,	<i>Ilex decidua</i> ,
<i>Rhamnus caroliniana</i> ,	<i>Benzoni benzoni</i> .

*Cypress Swamps.*

All of the above and the following: Trees, *Taxodium distichium*, *Fraxinus profunda*, *Catalpa speciosa*. Shrubs: *Styrax americana*, *Itea virginica*.

*Flood-plain forest*, (trees and shrubs not found in above places).

## Trees.

<i>Quercus alba</i> ,	<i>Fagus americana</i> ,	<i>Ulmus fulva</i> ,
“ <i>macrocarpa</i> ,	<i>Tilia americana</i> ,	<i>Fraxinus quadrangulata</i> ,
“ <i>platauride</i>	<i>Juglans cinerea</i> ,	<i>Gymnocladus dioica</i> ,
“ <i>imbricaria</i> ,	<i>Hicoria orata</i> ,	<i>Betula tinta</i> ,
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i> ,	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> ,	“ <i>nigra</i> .
<i>Acer saccharum</i> ,	<i>Ulmus americana</i> ,	

## Shrubs.

<i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> ,	<i>Aralia spinosa</i> ,	<i>Alnus nigrosa</i> ,
<i>Ptelea trifoliata</i> ,	<i>Adelia acuminata</i> ,	<i>Arundinaria tecta</i> ,
<i>Malus coronaria</i> ,	<i>Asimina triloba</i> ,	<i>Cercis canadensis</i> ,
<i>Euonymus aleopurpureus</i> ,	<i>Xanthoxylum americanum</i> ,	<i>Staphylea trifolia</i> .